

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BONN 18376 01 OF 02 211634Z

44

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-07 NSC-10 SPC-03 SS-20 RSC-01 L-03

CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-04 USIA-15 PRS-01

IO-14 SAJ-01 NIC-01 EB-11 FAA-00 DPW-01 DRC-01 ACDA-19

/148 W

----- 070616

R 211616Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9438

INFO AMEMBASSY BERN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USMISSION BERLIN

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRN, GW, WB

SUBJECT: CIVAIR - CLEARANCE FOR SWISS HOSPITAL FLIGHT
ZURICH-BERLIN AND RETURN

REF: (A) BONN 1305; (B) BONN 18173

1. SUMMARY: AFTER APPLYING FOR FLIGHT CLEARANCE TO WEST BERLIN AND INQUIRING RE POSSIBILITY OF USAF AIR EVAC. ASSISTANCE, SWISS AIR RESCUE SUCCEEDED IN OBTAINING CLEARANCE FOR A BERLIN/SCHOENEFELD LANDING. WHILE THE SWISS EVACUATION FLIGHT WAS APPARENTLY NOT A LIFE OR DEATH MATTER, THE CASE CLEARLY HAD STRONG HUMANITARIAN OVERTONES AND EMBASSY BELIEVES APPLICATION MIGHT HAVE WARRANTED FAVORABLE ALLIED CONSIDERATION HAD TIME PERMITTED. WE ARE INCLINED TO FEEL THAT QUESTION OF GRANTING ALLIED CLEARANCE FOR EXCEPTIONAL NON-THREE-POWER FLIGHTS OF THIS CHARACTER COULD NOW USEFULLY BE

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PAGE 02 BONN 18376 01 OF 02 211634Z

RAISED WITH BRITISH AND FRENCH. ACTION REQUESTED:

DEPARTMENT'S VIEWS WOULD BE APPRECIATED. END SUMMARY.

2. DR. BUHLER OF THE SWISS AIR RESCUE ORGANIZATION, A RED CROSS AFFILIATE, TELEPHONED US ON DECEMBER 19 TO FOLLOW UP HIS TELEXED REQUEST FOR AN AMBULANCE FLIGHT TO BERLIN, TEMPELHOF. BUHLER EXPLAINED THAT THE PATIENT (A BERLIN RESIDENT) WAS PARALYZED AS A RESULT OF A SURGICAL ACCIDENT IN ZURICH AND WAS TO BE TRANSPORTED TO A BERLIN HOSPITAL SPECIALIZING IN REHABILITATION THERAPY. PATIENT'S CONDITION WAS STABILIZED AND NOT CRITICAL; HOWEVER, DUE TO HIS AGE AND OTHER MEDICAL FACTORS INVOLVED IN THE CASE, BUHLER BELIEVED THAT TRANSFER TO ANOTHER AIRCRAFT ON ROUTE WOULD BE MEDICALLY UNDESIRABLE. MOREOVER, BUHLER SAID A SPECIALLY EQUIPPED AIR AMBULANCE WOULD BE MOST APPROPRIATE FOR A CASE OF THIS KIND. HE ADDED THAT HIS ORGANIZATION HAD ON AT LEAST ONE OCCASION PERFORMED A SIMILAR MISSION TO EAST BERLIN.

3. EMBOFF DESCRIBED SITUATION AS OUTLINED IN REFTELS POINTING OUT TRIPARTITE RESPONSIBILITY RE DIPLOMATIC CLEARANCE FOR WEST BERLIN FLIGHTS. (SWISS AIR RESCUE HAD NOT AS YET CONTACTED BRITISH AND FRENCH EMBASSIES HERE.) WE SAID WE WOULD, OF COURSE, BE WILLING TO DISCUSS THE APPLICATION WITH THE BRITISH AND FRENCH BUT THAT PROCEDURE WOULD BE TIME-CONSUMING AND OUTCOME AT BEST UNCERTAIN WITH A STRONG LIKELIHOOD APPLICATION WOULD BE DENIED. WE EMPHASIZED STRONGLY THAT IF PATIENT'S CONDITION OR OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES WARRANTED IMMEDIATE OR REASONABLY RAPID TRANSFER TO BERLIN, THE BEST COURSE OF ACTION WOULD BE TO SEEK ALTERNATIVE MEANS OF TRANSPORT AS SUGGESTED PARATHREE REFTEL (B). BUHLER RESPONDED THAT HE WOULD OPT FOR PURSUING THE APPLICATION FOR ALLIED DIPLOMATIC CLEARANCE CITING THE SWISS AIR RESCUE ORGANIZATION'S UNIQUE CAPABILITIES FOR PERFORMING MISSIONS OF THIS TYPE.

4. IN SEVERAL SUBSEQUENT CALLS BUHLER ASKED IF IT WOULD BE FEASIBLE FOR A US MILITARY AIR AMBULANCE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 BONN 18376 01 OF 02 211634Z

EQUIPPED TO ACCOMMODATE PATIENT'S STRETCHER AND ATTENDANT EQUIPMENT TO MEET THE SWISS AIRCRAFT AT FRANKFURT OR SOME OTHER POINT IN THE FRG ON DECEMBER 21. EMBASSY USAF LIAISON OFFICER THEN REFERRED THE MATTER TO USAF AIR EVACUATION CONTROL CENTER AT RHEIN/MAIN. WE NOW UNDERSTAND THAT AIR EVAC MEDICAL OFFICERS DISCUSSED THE CASE WITH THE ATTENDING PHYSICIANS AT ZURICH HOSPITAL AND CONCLUDED USAF EVACUATION FROM ZURICH WAS NOT

WARRANTED. WE WERE FURTHER ADVISED THAT THE QUESTION OF USAF AIR EVAC. CARRYING THE PATIENT FROM RHEIN/MAIN TO WEST BERLIN WAS TO BE REFERRED TO WASHINGTON FOR DETERMINATION. IN A FINAL CALL ON DECEMBER 21, BUHLER REPORTED HE HAD JUST RECEIVED CLEARANCE FOR A FLIGHT TO SCHOENEFELD WHICH HE INTENDED TO UTILIZE, MOVING THE PATIENT TO WEST BERLIN VIA AMBULANCE.

5. COMMENT: THE EMBASSY IS INCLINED TO BELIEVE THAT

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PAGE 01 BONN 18376 02 OF 02 211633Z

44

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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 02 OF 02 BONN 18376

GRANTING AN EXCEPTIONAL CLEARANCE FOR THIS FLIGHT GIVEN ITS SPECIALIZED AND HUMANITARIAN CHARACTER WOULD HAVE HELD NO SERIOUS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ALLIED POSITION RE BERLIN AIR ACCESS. HAD BUHLER'S OFFICE NOT ASKED FOR AIR EVAC ASSISTANCE AND EVENTUALLY OBTAINED CLEARANCE

TO SCHOENEFELD, IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN WORTHWHILE TO HAVE PURSUED THE MATTER FURTHER WITH THE BRITISH AND FRENCH CAA'S RECOMMENDING FAVORABLE CONSIDERATION. THE BRITISH AND FRENCH HAVE IN THE PAST TAKEN A VERY NEGATIVE POSITION TOWARD SIMILAR APPLICATIONS; HOWEVER, IT SEEMS TO THE EMBASSY THAT THERE IS MERIT NOW IN GRANTING CLEARANCES ON AN EXCEPTIONAL BASIS FOR NON-THREE POWER FLIGHTS, PARTICULARLY WHERE OVERRIDING HUMANITARIAN CONSIDERATIONS ARE INVOLVED. IT IS DIFFICULT TO PREDICT, OF COURSE, WHAT THE ATTITUDE OF THE SOVIETS WOULD BE TOWARD AN APPLICATION SIMILAR TO SWISS AIR RESCUE'S, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 02 BONN 18376 02 OF 02 211633Z

BUT IT SEEMS UNFORTUNATE TO US THAT THE ALLIES (RATHER THAN THE SOVIETS OR THE EAST GERMANS) SHOULD BE THE FIRST TO DENY ADMISSION TO WEST BERLIN FOR AN EXCEPTIONAL, HUMANITARIAN FLIGHT.

6. ACTION REQUESTED: DEPARTMENT'S VIEWS WOULD BE APPRECIATED.
HILLENBRAND

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